(c) whether such types of facilities would be provided to Sikhs, Christian and Hindu Pilgrims also; and

(d) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) and (b) Government makes arrangements for air travel of Haj Pilgrims to/from Saudi Arabia for which the pilgrims are required to pay fare at a subsidised rate. Besides, Government in cooperation with (he Government of Saudi Arabia also makes arrangements for the stay, transport, health check-up etc. of the Haj Pilgrims during their stay in Saudi Arabia. This year 69,721 Haj Pilgrims availed of these facilities.

(c) and (d) Government provides free medical facilities, security insurance cover and communication links for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. Besides, a grant at the rate of Rs. 3250 per pilgrim is also given to Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam to partially offset the expenditure incurred on boarding and lodging for the pilgrims. Delhi Government provides free stay to pilgrims at New Delhi. Facilitation of grant of visa, transport arrangements and liaison by Indian High Commission are provided to the pilgrims to Nanaksar (Pakistan). Administrative arrangements for pilgrimage to Amarnath, Vaishno Devi and Tirupati are made by the concerned State Governments and Boards.

Ticketing system at Taj Mahal and other monuments

*452. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any incident of reselling of tickets at Taj Mahal has come to the notice of Government;

(b) if so, the action taken against the personnels indulging in such acts;

(c) in what manner the ASI propose to streamline ticketing system at Taj and other important tourist places all over the country; and

(d) the details of the tiff between CISF and employees of ASI at Taj in December, 2002?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (d) A scuffle had taken place at the western gate of Taj Mahal between a monument attendant of Archaeological Survey of India and a

constable of CISF on 17.12.2002 while checking the entry ticket. CISF constable alleged that monument attendant had pocketed two tickets for resale and when he denied the charge, he was roughed up by the cor stable.

Immediately a three member enquiry committee comprising senior officers of Department of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India was constituted. Based on the findings of the committee Archaeological Survey of India staff involved in the incident were suspended. The supervisory official posted at Taj Mahal has been transferred. CISF has also suspended the constable who manhandled the Archaeological Survey of India staff. As per the directions of the Secretary, Home Affairs, CISF duties have been confined to the security of the monument. For stream lining the ticketing system more windows have been opened with additional staff.

Difficulties in implementation of VAT

†*453. SHRI UDAI PRATAP SINGH:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN 'DURRIT :

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ongoing controversies regarding the difficulties faced by the trade and commerce in proper implementation of the VAT have come to the notice of Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have held discussions with the State Governments and the representatives of the various trade unions so as to ascertain the real problems in the implementation of VAT in different States and to arrive at a procedure to overcome its shortcomings;

(d) whether Government are considering to amend the VAT keeping in view the protest by the traders against its implementation; and

(e) if so. the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (e) The Value Added Tax, is a State tax, to replace the existing sales tax system in the States and UTs. This is

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.